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DOE FOR CAROLYN GAY

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/13/2017

TAGS: PGOV KDEM NI

SUBJECT: MOSOP PRESIDENT'S VIEWS ON THE DELTA

Classified By: Charge d'Affairs Robert Gribbin for reasons 1.4.(b&d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. In a September 12 meeting, Ledum Mitee, President of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) discussed his views on the situation in the Niger Delta with the Charge, PolCouns, and PolOff. Although the Nigerian military Joint Task Force's presence has lessened gunfighting in the past few weeks, Mitee claims the militant gangs may be joining forces to stage a counterattack. Mitee went on to describe the corruption in the Rivers State government as well as within the ranks of the Joint Task Force (JTF). Mitee also expressed concern that the Federal Government continues to ignore the non-violent groups working in the Delta. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) MOSOP President Mitee told the Charge that people in Port Harcourt are relieved to see the presence of the JTF, which he said has minimized gunfighting over the past few weeks. He believes, however, that militant groups continue to recruit youths with the promise of earning "irresistible amounts of money" for little in return. Mitee expressed concern by reports that the gangs (called "cults" in Nigeria) are building up their arms and joining forces to stage counterattacks on the JTF. The combined manpower of the gangs could have devastating effects on the citizens of the Delta, he said.

¶3. (C) Mitee claimed a member of the JTF confided to him that the biggest obstacle to military efforts is the Rivers State government. He believed militant leaders still associate with government officials, and take advantage of the immunity they provide. According to Mitee, it is not unusual to see militants visiting government offices or residences. He said many people believe gangs are still receiving funds from government officials as a form of appeasement. Furthermore, due to the alleged immunity being provided by government officials, the JTF has little authority over individual members of the gangs. Mitee also explained that many JTF officers have become involved in the corruption, taking bribes from militants to allow gang activities to continue unhindered. Mitee alleged that many officers hope to be posted to the JTF in the Delta so they can personally take advantage of such corruption.

¶4. (C) Mitee expressed what he said was widespread and growing concern over the Federal Government's current approach of talking with only the most violent groups. He feared that some peaceful groups might start to believe the only way to get their message heard is by adopting violence themselves. He added that some non-violent groups feel that

their views and suggestions are purposefully ignored by those who are profiting from the current situation.

15. (C) COMMENT: Mitee, with a long history of activism, has great credibility in both Nigerian and international civil societies. Although his comments were unsurprising, they do corroborate reports from other sources in Abuja and in the Delta. Post will continue to stay in contact with Mitee for insight into the Delta situation. END COMMENT.

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16. (U) BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE ON LEDUM MITEE  
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Ledum Mitee, a lawyer, was a codefendant with Ogoni activist Ken Saro-Wiwa, the former President of MOSOP, who was tried and executed in 1995 during the Abacha regime. After spending two years in exile, Mitee returned to Nigeria in 1998 and is the current President of MOSOP. He lives in Port Harcourt and works closely with other civil society organizations in the Delta.

GRIBBIN